

October 11, 1995

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OCT 27 1995

FCC
Chairman Reed Hundt
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Commissioner Hundt:

**Strengthening the Children's Television Act is increasingly important--
TELEVISION HAS AN INFLUENTIAL EFFECT ON THE LIVES OF
THIS NATION'S CHILDREN.**

Children often must rely on television to be teachers and baby-sitters, especially in this day of *latch-key* children. Children must be given alternatives to the sexually explicit and violent programming that currently saturates the airways.

Commissioner Hundt, please give our nation's children an opportunity for better intellectual growth by acting on the following:

- **Set higher standards** for specifically designed educational and informational programming on all TV stations. Educational and informational programming can provide children an important opportunity for learning.
- **Refine the definition of *Educational and Informational Programming*.**
- **Exclude programs aired before 7 AM or 10 PM** from counting toward the *Educational and Informational Programming* requirement.
- **Keep sexually explicit and violent shows off the airways** during prime-children viewing times (after school through 9:00 PM, weekends). Children need alternatives to the violent cartoons and sexually explicit talk shows (Jenny Jones, Rikki Lake, Jerry Springer, etc.) that are currently being broadcast.

Strengthening the Children's Television Act is in the best interest of our children's health and welfare. The act could expand children's opportunities to learn and would provide alternatives to the sexually explicit and violent programs currently on the airways. Thank you for your actions on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Olson

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Sincerely,

Helen Stedman

MM93-48

RHONDA G. BLEVINS

4447 NW 59th Street, Oklahoma City, OK (405) 946-5106 • fax (405) 840-4808

October 16, 1995

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The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chair
The Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

FAX # 202-418-2801

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Dear Mr. Hundt:

I am sending you this fax to urge your consideration for the following regarding the Children's Television Act:

1. **Require each licensee to air no fewer than five hours of quality children's programming per week!**
2. **Define quality children's programming to include only programs that are specifically designed to educate or inform children between the hours of 7am and 10pm.**
3. **Prohibit trading or taking credit for hours already being aired on public broadcasting stations or other stations.**

Broadcasters, unlike other businesses including cable TV, use the public airwaves free of charge. The airwaves belong to the public--that's us. In return, they are supposed to serve "the educational and information needs of children in overall programming" as required by the Children's Television Act passed in 1991. But over the years, children have received less and less of a bargain as the networks produce more violent programming and count cartoons, sitcoms and public service announcements as their contributions to children.

Now is the time for FCC action, and we may not get this opportunity again for a long time. As TV venues get worse, as a greater number of parents get fed up with the industry's stalling strategies, as citizens become more concerned with violence in programming, the time is right for the **FCC TO VOTE FOR CHILDREN**. Children are three votes away from getting better TV. As a PTA parent, I am writing the FCC to express PTA's long standing support of better TV. Won't you do the same?

Sincerely,

Mrs. Rhonda Blevins

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October 19, 1995

Honorable Reed Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

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OCT 27 1995

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Chairman Hundt:

In several recent speeches, you have expressed the opinion that "NBA Inside Stuff," a weekly half-hour magazine show for teenagers on NBC's Saturday morning schedule, does not qualify as "educational and informational" pursuant to the Children's Television Act of 1990. NBC was frankly very surprised by your negative comments. "NBA Inside Stuff" represents a serious effort to respond to what Congress was driving at when it adopted the Children's Television Act.

- The National Basketball Association, working with NBC and an expert educational consultant, has made a major effort to produce a program that covers a broad array of educational and informational topics relevant to teenagers. A list of some of the subjects covered in segments of "NBA Inside Stuff" during 1995 is enclosed.
- The sports format of the show successfully appeals to a wide audience of teenagers, representing a wide range of ethnic and economic backgrounds.
- Since October, 1994, the NBA has employed Dr. Istar Schwager, a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology with a history of experience with the Children's Television Workshop, as an educational consultant to the show. Dr. Schwager manages a rigorous process, which is described in more detail below, to ensure that each episode of the program is specifically designed to serve the educational and informational needs of teens.

Given the serious effort by the NBA producers, working with an educational expert, to make the show both appealing and educational, and given the actual content of the show as reflected in the attached segment descriptions, NBC is at a loss to understand your blanket indictment, or even to understand what you perceive to be the program's specific shortcomings.

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Honorable Reed Hundt

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- Do you object to the educational topics covered in the program?

- Is there a problem with the process the NBA is using to ensure the educational/informational content of the program, or with the qualifications of their educational consultant?

- Is it inherently inappropriate to use a sports format to attract teenagers to an educational/informational program?

- Do you object to the balance struck between the sports material designed to attract the target audience and the material that is explicitly educational and informational?

We do not pretend to have all the answers in terms of how best to comply with the requirements of the Children's Television Act, and we would welcome a dialogue with you to elicit your views and any constructive suggestions you may have.

"NBA Inside Stuff" presents educational and informational material to teens by featuring the off-court activities of basketball players, coaches, former players and teenagers. The positive messages conveyed in the program have special significance coming from the sports heroes these young viewers admire. Dr. Schwager, whose curriculum video is enclosed for your information, has developed an ongoing curriculum for "NBA Inside Stuff" and she strives to have at least one curriculum goal featured in the program's educational/informational segments. The curriculum goals used in the show are based on several of the U.S. Department of Education's Goals 2000, with special emphasis on school completion and student achievement. The program continually reinforces messages about the importance of academic performance, cooperation, hard work, good health and staying in school. The value of discipline, persistence and taking responsibility are regularly discussed and demonstrated.

Most of the segments of "NBA Inside Stuff" are shot a few days before air, so Dr. Schwager provides input to the producers and writers of each episode of "NBA Inside Stuff" on ways to make each show educational and informative for the target audience based on an advance review of a written "run down" of the content of each show. The segments are then shot and edited with her guidance in mind. To the extent there is in-studio scripted material, she reviews it in advance and gives the writers input to enhance the educational and informational content. Finally, she prepares a written description of the content of each educational segment, which is furnished to NBC affiliates for inclusion in their children's programming reports, some of which are attached to this letter.

I hope this has clarified for you the basis on which NBC believes that "NBA Inside Stuff" meets

Honorable Reed Hundt
October 19, 1995
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the requirements of the Children's Television Act. Let me reiterate that NBC would welcome the opportunity to discuss your problems with "NBA Inside Stuff," and to get the benefit of any suggestions you may have as to how to resolve those problems. But we hope you would agree that a blanket indictment of the program, issued publicly without any discussion with us or with the NBA, was not appropriate in this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Cotton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard Cotton

NBA INSIDE STUFF

GUANTANAMO BAY

Players distribute holiday gifts to Cuban and Haitian refugee children, visit American troops and gain a new perspective on some of the difficulties of life, as they bring hope to those they meet.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Coach Lenny Wilkins had to overcome racial barriers to become the first African-American basketball coach in the NBA. About to break a record for coaching victories, he stresses the importance of judging a person by the content of his character.

HONORING MARTIN LUTHER KING

Several NBA players examine how Martin Luther King influenced their lives. They speak of being inspired by his courage to speak out and his messages of racial equality and tolerance.

STAY IN SCHOOL

Students with excellent attendance records are celebrated through the NBA's Stay in School campaign. NBA players discuss the value and endurance of an education.

COLLEGE FRESHMAN

College freshman Felipe Lopez, who excels in both athletics and academics, explains how he strives to be a positive example for his fellow Dominicans and also improve his already superb academic performance.

FAMILY ROLE MODELS

As a way of providing a positive model for young people, player and ordained minister Terry Cummings has created a music video which presents a stable family over many years.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Viewers learn that thousands of mentally retarded children and adults compete in sports year round. Player Muggsy Bogues is shown as an enthusiastic coach and supporter of a group of special athletes.

NBA STAY IN SCHOOL CELEBRATION

The importance of staying in school is the focus of this live special which brings together NBA players and spokespeople, celebrities and 16,000 Arizona school children. Students participating are celebrated for their attendance, attitude and achievement. Players David Robinson and Anfernee Hardaway explain how education is both enduring and practical. Player Grant Hill describes his positive attitude toward school and learning. Thirteen year-old pianist Sergio Salvatore discusses how any type of practice -- school, sports or music -- may be strenuous but yields positive results later. Other players and celebrities, including Sinbad, Queen Latifah, Brandy, Dennis Haskins, Mario Lopez, Boyz II Men, Charles Barkley, John Salley and Don

Majerle, examines how an education opens doors, creates options and provides opportunities. Also presented, through video clips, are service learning programs in which students learn by providing a service to their communities, and peer mediation programs in which student mediators help classmates resolve conflicts. It is indicated that the celebration is part of a multi-faceted Stay in School program which includes player visits to schools. Celebration hosts are Greg Lee and Inside Stuff hosts Ahmad Rashad and Willow Bay.

STAY IN SCHOOL

Selected for their attitude, attendance and achievement, 16,000 Phoenix students participate in the NBA All-Star Stay in School Celebration where they hear celebrities and NBA spokespeople emphasize the importance of education.

OVERCOMING A DISABILITY

Born with a badly damaged arm, Doug Dornu has nevertheless achieved recognition as a top high school basketball player by working extra hard to hone his skills.

BREAKING RACIAL BARRIERS

In 1950, Earl Lloyd was the first African American to play in an NBA game and thus broke the color barrier. He recalls and interprets the circumstances surrounding this event.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Having established an educational foundation, player David Robinson explains how he has taken on a role of leadership and greater responsibility for his team. Shown with his son, he discusses the importance of family.

TRADITION OF MENTORING

Player Joe Dumars, who models his game after Julius Erving's, serves as a mentor to rookie Grant Hill. Dumars gives a tour of his Detroit sports center, designed as a community facility for children and adults.

PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE

NBA players educate teens about the dangers of hand guns. Through discussions and reference to personal experience they help teenagers see alternatives.

CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS

After reading a letter from an abused child, player Karl Malone explains that one way to deter child abuse is for parents to build solid values and skills.

HELPING KIDS WITH MATH

Minnesota Timberwolves players involved in the Athletes Committed to Education program give back to the community by tutoring kids in math. They discuss the importance of staying in school and working hard.

BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Charlotte Hornets work with the Federal National Mortgage Association (FANNIE MAE) which sponsors a program to build housing and support home ownership. Players and future residents sometimes work side by side.

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

Shaquille O'Neal explains why reading is fundamental. He describes how reading opens the new worlds of information, is enjoyable, and is absolutely essential in getting a job.

A HEROIC GRADUATE

Fulfilling a promise to his grandmother, player Juwan Howard completed his college education while playing for the NBA. Seen graduating, Howard discusses the endurance of an education, his commitment to being a positive role model and future plans for continuing and using his education.

VISITING THE HEARD MUSEUM

Player Kevin Johnson gives a tour of the Heard Museum of Native American Art. He explores and explains some of the art and artifacts of the Indians of the Southwest.

INSPIRED BY A PLAYER

A school girl in Utah was inspired to overcome learning difficulties after viewing a video in which Patrick Ewing describes the challenges he faced adjusting to school in the U.S.

GRANT HILL VISITS A SCHOOL

When Grant Hill visits the 8th grade class of a contestant winner, he discusses the importance of education and his plans to become a teacher or lawyer.

FAST BUT SAFE

By taking special courses in race car driving, player Sean Elliot discovered that safety was essential. His lessons made him more aware of safety in his everyday driving.

CREATIVE ARTS WORKSHOP ADVENTURE

Player Charles Oakley hosted a visit to Great Adventure amusement park for a group of kids from the Creative Arts Workshop which teaches art, survival skills and cooperation to inner city children.

WALT BUILDS VOCABULARY

To expand fans' vocabularies and intrigue listeners, Walt Frazier uses expressive, descriptive words such as "riveting", "mesmerizing" and "tenacious" when he broadcasts Knicks games.

UNSELD SCHOOL

Wes Unseld and his wife have created a private elementary school where children learn music, are exposed to different cultures, and get a solid academic foundation.

TRIBE COMPETITION

When Native American tribes convene to play basketball they use the opportunity to discuss how to improve the lives of their young people.

Istar Schwager, Ph.D.
574 West End Avenue
New York, New York 10024
212-877-4368

Istar Schwager, Ph.D. is an educational psychologist and independent consultant who has extensive experience developing television, interactive and print programs for children and parents. From 1982 to 1984 she was the Associate Director of Research for Sesame Street and from 1984 to 1989 the Director of Research for the Children's Television Workshop Magazine Group. Since 1989, her clients have included Children's Television Workshop; AT&T; Publications International; National Basketball Association, Entertainment; Scholastic Productions; Hughes Galaxy Classroom; Duracell; HarperCollins; Kodak and Pillsbury. She is an advisor to the *Sesame Street Magazine* and *Sesame Street Parents*, for which she writes a monthly column. Dr. Schwager is a regular guest on Fox Cable Network's morning show and has been interviewed on numerous radio and television programs regarding children and education. She recently developed and taught a course for undergraduate film students at the School of Visual Arts in how to write screenplays for children. She has also taught child development and curriculum classes at Brooklyn College and Bank Street College. Her articles have appeared in *Working Mother*, *Parents*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Games* and *Principal* magazines. She has a B.A. from Barnard, an M.S. from Bank Street and a Ph.D. from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

ISTAR SCHWAGER, Ph.D.
574 West End Avenue
New York, New York 10024
(212) 877-4368

WORK EXPERIENCE

Independent Consultant/Educational Psychologist 1989 -

Specialize in child development, family and media issues

- **Strategic planning - new product development for Kodak, Pillsbury, Planters LifeSavers, BrainReserve**
- **Developed new show projects for Children's Television Workshop - member of new projects team**
- **Adviser to Sesame Street Magazine and Parents' Guide with monthly column for parents on range of topics**

Children's Television/Workshop/Director of Research for Magazine Group - 1984-1989

- **Child development and education expert for three children's magazines, publication for parents, and special projects**
- **Supervised all editorial research for magazine group**
- **Adviser to Family Living Series of books for parents**
- **Presentations on television, radio, to corporations, ad agencies and professional conferences about relevant topics**

Sesame street Television Show/Associate Director of Research - 1982-1984

- **Developed new curriculum for show on range of topics**
- **Reviewed all scripts before taping**

Learning to Read Through the Arts/Consultant - 1979-1982

- **Developed funding proposals for national exemplary program**
- **Evaluated program at developer/demonstrator and other sites**

Family Day Care Project/Project Associate - 1977-1979

- **Liaison between Agency for Child Development and Project**
- **Developed comprehensive program of filmstrips, study guides and training materials for family day care providers**

Other Activities

- **Written articles published in Good Housekeeping, Principal Games Magazine, and Sesame Street Parents' Guide**
- **Taught child development/curriculum at Bank Street College and Brooklyn College**
- **Prior to 1977 was a teacher -- involved in teacher training and curriculum development**

EDUCATION

**Ph.D. Educational Psychology. City University Graduate Center, Specialized
in development psychology. Dissertation on humor.**

M.S. Early Childhood. Bank Street College of Education.

B.A. Barnard College, Columbia University.